

## Sensory Circuits



**Sensory Circuits are a structured set of physical activities designed to energise, regulate and calm the nervous system. It aims to achieve an optimal level of alertness for engaging in learning experiences.**

Some children and young people whether due to early life experiences, ill health or neurodevelopmental disorders do not develop the pathways for sensory integration required to adequately process information they receive through their senses, make sense of that information and respond appropriately. Children can be under sensitive (hypo) and/or over sensitive (hyper) to a range of stimuli affecting one or more of their senses (sight, sound, taste, smell, touch/tactile, vestibular, proprioceptive). This will have a huge and wide ranging impact on potentially all areas of development. While sensory circuits can't themselves resolve sensory processing difficulties, they can help to mitigate the impact of them for short periods of time and support the child or young person to be more alert, focused and engaged. Circuits can be done at school or at home and short, more regular circuits are likely to have the biggest impact particularly prior to any activity that requires focus and thinking.

### **Benefits can include:**

- Improvements in self-esteem
- Development of physical skills
- Improved focus and attention
- Improved communication skills



## The Sensory Circuit

The circuit runs in three sections with a consistent order

### Alerting

The aim of this 1<sup>st</sup> section is to provide vestibular and proprioceptive stimulation. Alerting activities are designed to get the body moving, blood flowing, and ear fluid moving through head movements preparing the brain for learning. Any type of movement will stimulate the vestibular receptors, but spinning, swinging, and hanging upside down provide the most intense, longest lasting input.

### Organising

This section includes activities that require motor sensory processing, balance and coordination. The child needs to organise their body, plan their approach and multi-task in a sequential order. These activities engage and promote executive functioning skills which are essential for problem solving, planning and impulse control.

### Calming

These activities use deep pressure and heavy muscle work to calm and organise the senses to improve concentration and focus. The calming activities are very important as they provide input to ensure that children finish the circuit calm, centred and ready for the day ahead. Activities typically include proprioceptive or deep pressure exercises and should be done at a slow pace.

You can spend as much or as little time as you need to on each activity and section – be guided by the child – 10 seconds might be enough while other activities might take a bit longer. **If a child is usually under stimulated, spend longer on alerting. If they are over stimulated, spend longer on organising and calming activities.**

### Visual Prompts

It can be helpful to visually map out the circuit either with pictures at each station so the children physically move to each new activity, or a picture on the board to signal the next activity, or create a sensory circuit journey along a corridor. See ideas at the end.

### Equipment

These circuits have been designed with minimal or no equipment required, however, if space and equipment is available, ideas for incorporating items are also provided.

## Section 1 Alerting Activities

### Minimal Equipment

Star jumps
Bunny hops, crab walks, frog jumps – a visual path to follow can help with this one
Hopping
Wall jumps – jump against a wall trying to hit a higher point on the wall each time
Running on the spot
Jump forward and backward between 2 points
Crouch to jumping jack and back to crouch
Sprints – trying to beat the previous time

### With Equipment

Activity	Equipment
Skipping	Skipping ropes
Bouncing, jogging, star jumps, catching a ball while jumping on a trampette	Trampette
Jumping off a trampette onto a mat – 5 bounces then jump; star jump; jump twice, clap twice in the air then land	Trampette Crash mat
Space Race – jump around a course of cones on a space hopper or just jump feet together if no space hopper available	Space hopper Cones to make a course
Bounce while sitting on an exercise ball	Exercise ball
Jogging – on the spot, between cones, jog to a cone and do jumping jacks or standing sprints	Cones
Hopscotch	Tape or chalk to mark out a hopscotch course
Hula Hoop – rotate as many times as possible, work up to doing this blindfolded	Hula hoop Blindfold
Step ups – work on alternating lead leg, increase speed, step up and jump back down	Bench or step
Climbing on, jumping from, hanging upside down from a climbing frame	Climbing frame

## Section 2 Organising Activities

### Minimal Equipment

Follow a chalk line drawn on the floor
Copying Sequences. Children copy a series of actions determined by the adult. Increase the number of actions gradually. Let the children take a turn of making up the sequence
Simon Says game
Blow a paper ball along a path or to hit a target
Throw a small item into any container varying the distance and angle
Throw an item in the air and count how long it takes to come back down
Throw an item between both hands
Log rolls, hands clasped and arms stretched out above head – how many rolls can they do?
Infinity Walk: walk round 2 chairs, in and out in a figure of eight. Repeat with eyes closed.
Commando crawling
Wheelbarrow – hold the child’s feet and encourage them to walk on their palms

### With Equipment

Activity	Equipment
Assault Course – be creative! Walk along a bench, crawl under a chair, throw a bean bag into a bucket Walk along a bench with a bean bag on their head, turn around, catch a ball	Bench Bean bags Bucket/target
Floor is lava – walk heel to toe along a line or make a path with 2 ropes – keep inside the lines!	Court line Rope
Make a path between 2 cones with not enough ‘stone’s (ie they must bring the mats they’ve previously used and place them ahead so they can cross)	Cones Stepping stones/mats
Rolling Ball – lie with tummy on top of the ball with arms stretched out and palms on the floor, walk out hands as far as possible so the ball moves down to the child’s legs/feet and return to the start. Or while in this position pick up and throw a bean bag at a target.	Exercise ball
Balance or walk along a beam	Beam, bench
While in a crouched position complete an activity e.g a jigsaw, stack cups, throw a bean bag in a cup,	Any resources available
Throw beanbags or ball into a box or basket – move the container to different distances and angles	Throwing item and container
Throw and catch while sitting on a wobble board or cushion	Wobble board or cushion
Bend a rope into different shapes - walk along it and jump over it from side to side.	Rope

## Section 3 Calming Activities

### Minimal Equipment

Push the Wall Standing - facing the wall with feet about 2 feet away from the wall, place both hands and encourage the child to push the wall away as hard as possible.
Push the Wall Feet - lying on the floor with legs at 90 degree angle and feet flat on the wall, push the wall away as hard as possible
Push the Wall Back! Get the child to stand as straight as possible with their back to the wall (as if you are checking their height) If a child struggles to keep their back against the wall it's an indication of difficulties with vestibular and proprioceptive processing – practicing this every day can help!
Sit or stand, place hands on head with fingers crossed and press down for 10 seconds, release then repeat
Squeeze roll – lying on your back, bring legs up to chest, hug with arms and gently roll from side to side
Deep pressure massage on hands or arms
Squeeze and relax a small toy, fidget toy, cushion, lemon or hands
Press ups – use the wall, benches, floor, on hands and knees or legs extended. Encourage the movement of bending at the elbows.
Yoga poses
Breathing and mindfulness exercises
Blowing bubbles

### With Equipment

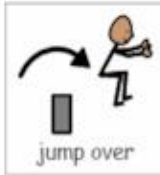
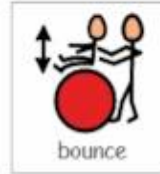
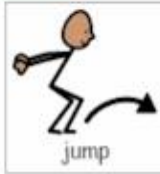
Activity	Equipment
Heavy assault course – fill a backpack with heavy items) or pull a trolley filled with heavy items) and move around a course of cones, extend to involve bending to pick up items	Backpack filled with books, heavy items (check the child can carry it without affecting posture)
Plank – lying face down on the floor, the child comes up onto forearms and toes. Encourage a flat back. Hold for 10 seconds and increase the time.	Gym mat
Heavy blanket – sit or lie under with soothing music	Weighted or heavy blanket
Wall hanging – holding on to wall bars or a climbing frame allow the child to hang.	Wall bars Climbing frame
Tyres – lifting, moving, pushing	Tyres
Tight Squeeze – there are lots of ways to provide deep pressure – it often involves trial and error to see what the child prefers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sausage roll – roll them up tight in blanket or yoga mat and apply light pressure to their back (always check they can breathe ok)</li> <li>Child lying on front, use bean bags or exercise ball to apply light pressure to the back, legs and arms</li> </ul>	Blanket Bean bags Yoga mat Gym ball

# Visualising Sensory Circuits

## Sensory Circuit activities



















### Alerting














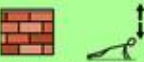



# Sensory Circuit

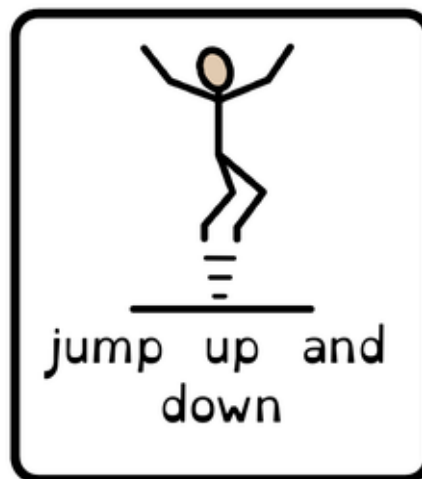
Choose an activity from each section to make a mini Sensory obstacle course. You can use items from home and change the activities a few times to create a brand new course each time.

 alert	 organise	 calm
Choose 1 alert activity bounce    jump 30 times  dance    run 	Choose 1 organise activity balance    ball throw  funnel crawl    Simon says 	Choose 1 calming activity wall push up    prime squats  arm massage    blanket roll 

  
 Sensory circuits

<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between; align-items: center;"> <div data-bbox="592 1240 767 1323">   <b>Alerting activities</b> </div> <div data-bbox="847 1256 1023 1323" style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;"> <b>1</b>  1 minute  per activity                 </div> </div> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; margin-top: 10px;"> <div data-bbox="544 1375 687 1458">                       Star jumps <input type="checkbox"/> </div> <div data-bbox="746 1375 991 1458">                       Running on the spot <input type="checkbox"/> </div> </div>
<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between; align-items: center;"> <div data-bbox="592 1500 783 1583">   <b>Organising activities</b> </div> <div data-bbox="847 1516 1023 1583" style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;"> <b>2</b>  2 minute  per activity                 </div> </div> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; margin-top: 10px;"> <div data-bbox="571 1630 687 1713">                       Hop <input type="checkbox"/> </div> <div data-bbox="746 1630 991 1713">                       Walk in a line <input type="checkbox"/> </div> </div>
<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between; align-items: center;"> <div data-bbox="592 1760 761 1843">   <b>Calming activities</b> </div> <div data-bbox="847 1776 1023 1843" style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;"> <b>2</b>  2 minute  per activity                 </div> </div> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; margin-top: 10px;"> <div data-bbox="539 1890 767 1973">                       Wall press up <input type="checkbox"/> </div> <div data-bbox="842 1890 1043 1973">                       Seal pose <input type="checkbox"/> </div> </div>

## Alerting Activities





# GARDEN YOGA FOR KIDS



## Pretend to be a tree

Tree Pose: Stand on one leg. Bend the other knee and place the sole of your foot on your inner thigh. Sway like a tree in the breeze. Now the other side.



## Pretend to be a frog

Squat Pose: Come down to a squat with your knees apart and arms resting between your knees. Touch your hands to the ground. Jump like a frog.



## Pretend to be a seed

Child's Pose: Sit back on your heels and bring your forehead down to rest on the floor. Pretend to be a seed in the garden.



## Pretend to be a butterfly

Cobbler's Pose: Sit on your buttocks with a tall spine. Bend your legs with the soles of your feet together. Flap your legs like the wings of a butterfly.



## Pretend to be a flower

Flower Pose: Lift your bent legs, balancing on your sitting bones. Weave your arms under your legs, palms up. Pretend to be a flower in bloom.



printable yoga poster